

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

May 6, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 p.m. by Chairperson, D. Chambers.

MEMBERS PRESENT: D. Chambers, J. Hilt, L. Spataro, L. Cole, A. Medema,
T. Russo

MEMBERS ABSENT: T. Bosma

STAFF PRESENT: B. Lazor, H.Griffith

OTHERS PRESENT: R. Precious, 1006 3rd St.; B. Gillard, 1121 Peck; I. Blake-
Evans, Muskegon High School Faculty; Muskegon High
School Students.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 1, 2003 was made by J. Hilt, supported by T. Russo and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Case 2003-21: Request to demolish the garage. Applicant: Brass Tacks Construction Inc. (Gary Schottke); 1516 Clinton; District: Clinton-Peck; Class: A. B. Lazor presented the staff report. Applicant wishes to remove garage from rear of property. Applicant has permits to repair, but garage shows much deterioration. Applicant states that homeowner does not want garage and it would be costly to repair. There are two standards involved in this situation. The first one deals with structures that have little historical or architectural worth and the second one deals with structures that do have historical and architectural worth. Staff believes that the garage located behind 1516 Clinton does not possess significant historical or architectural value and it would not be a detriment to the district if the structure were demolished, therefore staff recommends approval. Staff reminds applicant to obtain all necessary permits.

L. Cole stated that she had looked at the garage. There is nothing historic regarding the garage. A. Medema asked if there was a cement pad or a dirt floor. B. Lazor stated that the applicant didn't specify as to what flooring was in the garage.

A motion that the garage located behind 1516 Clinton does not possess architectural or historical worth and demolition of the structure is approved, was made by L. Cole, supported by J. Hilt and unanimously approved.

L. Spataro arrived at 4:10 p.m.

Case 2003-22: Request to install lighting. Applicant: St. Pauls Episcopal Church (Randy Precious); 1006 3rd Street; District: National Register; Class: AA. B. Lazor presented the staff report. In general, applicant wishes to light dark areas surrounding the building for security reasons and to enhance the look of the church by illuminating certain areas. Applicant wishes to install 10 lights surrounding the church as indicated in the supplied drawing. In general these light are High Pressure Sodium which casts a yellowish light onto the building. The applicant has supplied a plan indicating the placement of the lighting fixtures. The fixtures along clay will be placed next to the building mainly behind the bushes. The lights along third will be placed in the lawn. The fixtures appear to be small and generally unobtrusive. The lighting being proposed appears to have a minimal visual impact upon the structure during the daytime. The light being attached to the rear of the building will replace one that is already there. The other lights will be mounted on the ground and do not appear to harm the visual quality of the site in the daytime. At night, the lights will help to illuminate the church to make it more secure and attractive, therefore staff recommends approval. Staff reminds applicant to obtain all necessary permits.

A. Medema asked if the request was for flood or decorative lights. R. Precious stated that the lights are flood type lights. The lights would be mounted on the ground and would illuminate up toward the building. D. Chambers added that they are a low profile light. R. Precious stated that the lights would enhance the architecture of the building. He felt this would be beneficial to the site as well as the downtown area.

A motion that the installation of the lights be approved per submitted details, was made by J. Hilt, supported by A. Medema and unanimously approved.

Case 2003-23: Request to Remove Fencing. Applicant: Jared & Sarah Pulling; 502 W. Webster; District: Clay-Western; Class: AA. B. Lazor presented the staff report. Applicant wishes to remove chain-link fence from property to the right of driveway. Fence is running diagonal across the yard and includes a gate. Also, applicant wishes to remove the “chicken wire” fence material that attaches to the chain-link section. Since chain-link fencing is generally not appropriate for use in historic districts, staff recommends approval of the removal of the fence and gate.

L. Spataro stated that the fencing was historically inappropriate. He is in favor of the fence removal.

A motion that the removal of the chain-link fence and “chicken wire” fence that runs diagonally across the rear of the property be approved, was made by L. Spataro, supported by T. Russo and unanimously approved.

Staff update on 502 W. Webster. B. Lazor presented the staff report. Previously the Historic District Commission has reviewed the special use permit for this address in concept. The greatest concern from the HDC was in regards to the parking situation. Other concerns in general were with the character of the site, it may be too high intensity of use, and a precedent would be set. The site is located in the downtown parking overlay zone, which allows required parking to be located within 1,000 feet of the site. This will generally take care of excess parking. Staff to the Planning Commission will recommend a condition upon the approval of the Special Use Permit that no more than two cars will be permitted to park in the driveway unless a small increase in the width of the driveway is approved and constructed. Heritage Districts allow for 1 or 2 family dwellings under principal uses permitted. A bed and breakfast could be considered a less intense use. The Historic District Commission has been asked to make a formal recommendation to the Planning Commission.

L. Spataro stated that some of the concerns that the Planning Commission had, was that they would like to see a site plan done to scale accommodating 7 on site parking spaces. Should the applicant go with the downtown parking overlay zone, the Planning Commission would like to see a signed agreement sharing parking within 1,000 ft. of this site. They were also concerned with the type of parking surface that would be used and that it would meet HDC approval. D. Chambers stated that he had a problem with having asphalt behind the garage. He had concerns with this type of use in this neighborhood. A. Medema stated that asphalt would make the neighborhood look bad. She has spoken with some of the neighbors in this neighborhood and they were opposed to this use in the neighborhood. L. Cole asked how this was considered a less intensive use. B. Lazor gave an explanation. L. Spataro stated that when the Planning Commission had asked the applicant if there would be any seminars where people wouldn't be staying at the residence for the night, the applicant seemed hesitant with the answer. Should seminars be performed at the site, this would be more along the lines of a commercial use. A. Medema stated that the downtown area promotes tourism. She is opposed to this type of use in this neighborhood.

A motion, based on the information provided to the HDC and that gravel is not an acceptable parking surface, that the special use permit be recommended to the Planning Commission for denial, was made by A. Medema, supported by J. Hilt and unanimously approved.

Case 2003-24: Request to Remove Awnings/Shutters, Replace Steps and Railing, Install New Railing and Chain Link Fence. Applicant: Elizabeth Sherman; 1337 Peck St; District: McLaughlin; Class: A.

B. Lazor presented the staff report. Applicant wishes to remove the two awnings located above the 2nd floor windows in front of the house and remove the shutters from the front door. Applicant also wishes to replace 2-3 steps leading to the front porch, secure or replace railing on steps to front porch, and install metal railing around rear second floor porch. Finally, applicant wishes to install 5' chain link fence in rear of the house as indicated in the supplied drawings. Applicant supplied examples of front handrail and rear 2nd floor porch railing. The sheet labeled front handrail has two examples of railings applicant wishes to install. Applicant has also submitted a drawing of the railing she proposes for the upper rear porch. It will be 36" high and made out of metal. She wants to put ornamentation in between some of the spindles, but was unsure of what at time of application. She will have further detail at the meeting. A photo dating back to 1972 indicate that there were no awnings on the windows, but the photo does not show if the shutters were there. The shutters do not match the height of the door so they look out of place. Staff recommends approval of the removal of the awnings and shutters and the replacement of the front steps with material that matches what is currently there. Staff recommends approval to replace the front railing with either the post and rail or the traditional handrail because the current handrail looks to be in bad shape. Staff also recommends the approval of the installation of the handrail on the 2nd floor rear porch per submitted detail. The chain link fence in the rear yard seems to be obscured by current vegetation and applicant wishes to plant more vegetation to further obscures it, therefore staff recommends approval.

L. Spataro asked what the planned use would be for the home. B. Lazor stated that the owner would live in the home and she was thinking about turning the home into a Bed and Breakfast. L. Spataro stated that the shutters and awnings deter from the home. He would have no problem with approving this request. B. Lazor stated that the applicant may want to have decorative features on the railing. He asked if the commission members if they would want this to go before them or if staff could approve the decorative features on the railings if the applicant would like to have them. A. Medema felt staff could approve the decorative railings.

A motion that the removal of the two 2nd floor front awnings and front door shutters, the replacement of the front steps, the installation of the front step railing, the installation of the rear 2nd floor porch railing, and the 5' chain link fence be approved per submitted details with the following conditions: 1) 1. The front steps are to be replaced with like materials, in size, shape, and look. 2) The front porch railing be either the Post and Rail or Traditional Handrail as submitted. 3) The 2nd floor rear porch railing decorative features are subject to staff approval, was made by L. Cole, supported by L. Spataro and unanimously approved.

Case 2003-25: Request to Change Front Door and Upper Bay Window. Applicant: Peck Properties LLC (Brandon Gillard); 1121 Peck St; District: McLaughlin; Class: A. B. Lazor presented the staff report. Applicant has installed a new beveled glass steel door to replace the wooden front entry double door. Applicant states that the old door was in very bad repair. The door chosen to replace the double door was done so for security purposes and applicant felt that it fit in with the look of the house. Applicant also wishes to duplicate 6-panel treatment of lower bay window on upper bay window. Treatment of lower window was found when researching historic files located in the Planning Department. Applicant also wishes to have direction from the HDC as to a design for the "Stained Glass" inserts on the upper part of the windows. Applicant cannot find close-ups of the glass details. Staff recommends approval of the 6-panel window treatment on the upper bay window. As a first course of action, the front door either should have been fixed or replaced. Henry Faltinowski, Inspections Department, indicated to staff that the original door was in bad shape and was probably not repairable. He also pointed out that a similar solid core door may be able to be found for around \$1,000. After discussion with the applicant, he indicated that he was willing to leave the original doors for the new homeowners. They may be willing to restore it or find a similar replacement. Staff recommends the approval of the change in the front door, while it is not an exact replacement of the double wooden door, it is in an "A" district and generally conforms to HDC door styles. Staff reminds applicant that all future changes to the exterior, unless previously approved, would need to come before the HDC.

L. Spataro stated that the original stain glass was more of a rectangular shape with random colors. The rectangles were about 4 inches wide and the height fit the pane. He had spoken with Commissioner R. Schweifler about this home because he had lived there. Commissioner R. Schweifler was going to check to see if his family had any pictures of what the home had looked like. The current door isn't keeping in style with the rest of the home. D. Chambers agreed. When it's not directly aligned, it is damaging to the facade of the house. T. Russo stated that the double doors look nice, but they are drafty and are easy to push through. L. Spataro agreed that double doors aren't secure. He has no problem with replacement of the original door. He felt that the proposed door wasn't appropriate. If the proposed door would have been a basic door with 2 lites; he would have no problem with approving it. B. Gillard stated that they do have the original doors. He plans on leaving them with the home in case the new owners would prefer to have them fixed and installed. He informed the commission members of the process he is using to create the stained glass look. He added that if he had pictures of what the house had looked like, he would try to recreate the same look. L. Spataro asked if it was possible to change the door to one that is more symmetrical to what was there. B. Gillard stated that they had tried to go with a door that they thought followed the style. L. Spataro stated that if this request had been submitted prior to the door being installed, it could have been changed. He wants to facilitate the accomplishment of the renovation of the homes and would support this request.

A motion that the 6 panel window treatment as seen in application and the installation of the new steel door be approved with the condition that the double wooden former front door shall be left for the next owners, was made by L. Spataro, supported by J. Hilt and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Case 2003-16: Request to Install Fencing. Applicant: FenceMan of Muskegon; 1587 Peck St.; District: Clinton-Peck; Class: A.: (tabled) The commission members were provided with the excerpt of the minutes from the April Meeting. B. Lazor presented the staff report. After visiting the site and speaking with the contractor staff recognizes that the 4' galvanized chain and posts looped fence would not be a visually blighting influence upon the area. The contractor indicated that instead of taking the fence all the way to the sidewalk, the homeowner was willing to stop the fence at the front of the house as seen in supplied drawing (option 2). The apparent nature of this fencing is more like an iron fence than it is like a chain-link fence. Staff recommends only bringing the fence to the front of the house and painting it to match the other metal fencing on the front porch.

L. Spataro stated that he had no preference to the color.

A motion that the 4' galvanized chain and posts looped fence with installation from the front of the garage to the front of the house be approved was made by L. Spataro, supported by A. Medema and unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Western Avenue Lighting. The commission members were supplied with information regarding the lights. B. Lazor stated that Consumer's would maintain the lights. This will be going before the City Commission for approval. He added that this was information that was being given to the commission members, no decision is necessary. L. Spataro stated that a style was picked to tie the downtown area together. The Amazon paid for the lights that they have on their property. They also maintain them. L. Cole asked when the lights would be installed. B. Lazor stated that the lights should be installed within the next couple of months.

Prioritization List. B. Lazor informed the commission members that they will be reviewing their priority list at the next meeting. They will also need to update the standards and look at the possibility of new ones. There have been some issues regarding air conditioning units in windows and satellite dishes.

Muskegon Mall. D. Chambers stated that the committee would be having a meeting to work on designating some of the buildings in the Muskegon Mall into historic districts. A member of the Charter Group would also be at the meeting. B. Lazor gave a description of the process for creation of historic districts.

Questions. The commission members had a question and answer session with the Muskegon High School students and I. Blake-Evans.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

hmg 5/6/03

"We admire that which is old not because it is old, but because it is beautiful."

Winston Churchill